Tells the Facts and Names the Names

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The Democrats Collapse Again

Whatever Happened to the Anti-war Movement?

By Alexander Cockburn

America right now is "anti-war", in the sense that about two-thirds of the people think the war in Iraq is a bad business and the troops should come home. Anti-war sentiment was a major factor in the success of the Democrats in last November's elections, when they recaptured Congress. The irony is that this sharp disillusion of the voters with America's occupation of Iraq owes almost nothing to any anti-war movement. To say the anti-war movement is dead would be an overstatement. But in comparison to kindred movements in the 1960s and early 1970s, or to the struggles against Reagan's wars in Central America in the late 1980s, it is certainly inert.

Of course, back in the Vietnam era America had the draft. The imminent possibility that one might be compulsorily drafted into the Army or the Marines and find oneself in the Mekong Delta in six months concentrated the minds of middle-class 18-year-olds on the horrors of war with marvelous speed, just as it concentrated the minds of their parents. Today there is no draft. It's true that many of the soldiers deployed in Iraq have been compelled to serve double tours of duty; that others have been people facing criminal conviction and offered the option of prison or enlistment in the army; that others again are illegal immigrants offered a green card or U.S. citizenship in exchange for service in Iraq. But every member of the U.S. military in Iraq or Afghanistan is a volunteer – at least in the technical

(Cockburn *continued on page 2)*

A Day in the Life and Death of Motown

By George Corsetti

Detroit.

I woke up about 3 a.m. to the sound of automatic weapons fire. Three or four bursts, maybe a couple of dozen shots in all. It's hard to tell where it came from – somewhere here, on the east side. We have a lot of pheasants, nesting where houses once stood only a short distance from downtown. But this was probably an irate homeowner chasing a would-be burglar or a drug deal gone bad. The sound of gunfire is common in Detroit – a little worse on weekends perhaps – so I roll over and try to get back to sleep.

Daylight comes, and I get on the computer trying to catch up with a world that's already in progress. Seems Detroit bus drivers are on strike, stranding some 120,000 riders. The bus drivers are complaining about the lack of security - too many assaults on the city's rickety substitute for mass transit and they want cops riding on the buses. If you don't have a car in this city, you're screwed. You can wait for hours for buses that never come and when they do, they're filled with angry people. Detroit has the highest unemployment rate in Michigan, a state with the country's highest unemployment rate. Summer is coming with kids out of school and on the streets. There are no jobs for adults, let alone kids. The police have taken to arresting parents who can't or won't rein in their delinquent children. Police stage perp walks for the media, with handcuffed parents being led off to court – a desperate attempt to send a message to other parents.

Coming back from downtown, I see the TV news helicopters circling like buzzards over my neighborhood. As I get closer, I see people out on the street heading for the intersection ahead where a police car is smashed and partly burned. Seems the police were chasing suspected carjackers and crashed. The suspects' hijacked car, also smashed, sits near the median. The police found guns in the car and believe the passengers were part of a neighborhood gang. There must be 20 cop cars here, and you can see the police are edgy as the crowd of onlookers gets larger.

As I get back in my car and drive a few blocks home, I pass a lot of "for sale" signs – lots of sellers, not many takers. There are also quite a few boarded up houses and houses that have no signs and look like they might be occupied. But they have high weeds in front instead of grass and on second glance it's apparent the people just walked away from these houses. Detroit has the highest foreclosure rate among metropolitan areas – five times the national average. Sub prime lending was rampant here a few years ago, and a lot of people were living off home equity loans, not to mention high-interest credit cards. Those days are mostly gone, but the economic devastation they wrought is only now becoming apparent.

Back on the computer in late afternoon I read about the Democrats caving in to Bush and how the appropriations bill won't include a withdrawal timeline. The war goes on. I'm still pissed that my "liberal" senator, Carl Levin, voted against setting a timeline in the last bill. But he must be a little worried with the election coming up because I see puff pieces in the local papers talking about how he led the fight against the war and how some so-called Washington anti-war group still loves him, even while the Michigan chapter of Military Families Speak Out holds another demonstration at Levin's office. Makes me wonder about his leadership qualities and whether he took a dive in

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(**Cockburn** *continued from page 1)*

sense.

In the near future no U.S. administration will take the political risk of trying to bring back the draft, even though lack of manpower is now a very serious problem for the Pentagon. By the same token, the absence of the draft is certainly a major factor in the weakness of the anti-war movement. But though there was no draft in the Reagan years, there was certainly a very vital peace movement opposing Reagan's efforts to destroy the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua and to crush the revolutionary insurgency in El Salvador.

I remember well criss-crossing America in those years, giving anti-intervention speeches on campuses, in churches and labor halls in scores of towns in pretty much every state in the union. Almost every American town in every decade has its dissident community. At any rally you can see the historical strata in human contour.

Up until a decade ago there would be the old Communists, maybe veterans of the Lincoln Brigade that volunteered to fight for the Republic in the Spanish Civil War. Into the late 1980s, these old fellows were often the best organizers. Then there would be anti-war activists like the late Dave Dellinger, who went to federal prison as a pacifist in World War Two. There were people who came of age politically with Henry Wallace and the Progressive Party that challenged Truman from the left in 1948. A slightly younger cohort learned its organizing in the years of the Korean War and the rise of the Civil Rights Movement. Old labor organizers rubbed shoulders with Quakers and Unitarians. Then there's the Vietnam generation, many of them in their mid-60s now. More than once, in the South, I've found that the still-active sparks are former Maoists who deployed to places like Birmingham, Alabama, as their revolutionary duty and who took root as civil rights attorneys or public defenders or labor organizers.

There are hundreds of overlapping "lefts" in America, mustered in their separate struggles – for immigrants' rights, for public control of energy, against military recruitment. There are the anarchists, the Trotskyite groups. And when a war comes along, as it does with great regularity in America, they coalesce into an anti-war movement. They certainly did in the late 1980s. The other day I found in a box of old papers in my garage a directory to "sister-cities" – towns in the U.S.A. that had "paired" with beleaguered cities in Nicaragua, exchanging regular delegations. The directory was as thick as a medium-sized telephone book. There were hundreds of such pairings.

There was just such a coalescing in the demonstrations against the WTO in the late 1990s, particularly in the actions in Seattle.

When Democrats in the U.S. Congress in mid-March felt obliged to send President Bush the message that he should bring the troops home before he leaves office, they weren't voting in the shadow of a mighty throng of protesters cramming into the open spaces in front of the Lincoln Memorial, their slogans rattling the windows of Congress. They were voting in the shadow of the elections of 2008, and eager to display in gesture, if not in substance, some acknowledgement of a general anti-war feeling abroad in the land.

It looked, back in 2003, on the eve of the U.S. attack on Iraq, that a vigorous anti-war movement would flare into life. There were some very big rallies. But across the four ensuing years, as the full ghastly futility and destructiveness of the war has become more and more manifest, the anti-war movement has got weaker. In late January 2007, the major anti-war coalition – United for Peace and Justice

(**Cockburn** *continued on page 3)*

Editors
Alexander Cockburn
Jeffrey St. Clair

Assistant Editor
Alevtina Rea

Business
Becky Grant
Deva Wheeler

Counselor
Ben Sonnenberg

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PO Box 228
Petrolia, CA 95558
1-800-840-3683 (phone)
counterpunch@counterpunch.org

(**Corsetti** *continued from page 1)*

Summer is coming with kids out of school and on the streets. There are no jobs for adults, let alone kids.

his "fight" against the war. Sometimes I think he worries about Israel too much and Michigan too little.

And as evening sets in after a scorchingly hot day in Detroit, I'm sitting out on a friend's back porch sipping red wine and talking about Middle East politics and the endless war in Iraq when my brain slips a gear. And I vividly remember driving around Detroit in 1967 and seeing the 82nd airborne patrolling the streets of the city. Their fatigues were a faded green, bleached from the sun in that other endless war in Vietnam. Detroit has a lot less population now than it did in 1967. We've slipped to 11th, as capital and population follows profits. And the city is about 85 per cent African American with all executive, legislative and judicial posts overwhelmingly black. But racism persists, and the mostly white state legislature views the problems of Detroit as self-inflicted. It doesn't help that the state is on the verge of bankruptcy with state employees taking unpaid holidays and the governor talking openly of releasing inmates from the bloated corrections system. Even Jack Kevorkian, Dr. Death himself, is about to be sprung next month. Economic desperation abounds in Michigan, but Detroit in particular is devastated.

But Detroit may just be on the cutting edge of the new economic reality. As the housing bubble bursts nationwide, gas prices and unemployment continue to rise, disposable income falls and the dollar plummets, other major cities may soon join Detroit. What is absolutely clear, even to the ruling class and James Baker III, is that the country cannot continue to pour money down that rathole in Iraq. If Detroit is any indication, we are all very close to the edge and something needs to be done NOW. CP

George Corsetti is a Detroit attorney and filmmaker who, along with Jeanie Wylie and Richard Wieske, made a documentary film *Poletown Lives!* about the destruction of Poletown. He can be reached at gcorsetti@ameritech.net.

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(**Cockburn** *continued on page 2)*

– held a rally in Washington, D.C. It mustered a respectable number of people. It featured Hollywood stars like Sean Penn and Sixties icons like Fonda and her erstwhile partner, Tom Hayden. But it was, alas, rather dreary, rather predictable. To be memorable and effective, an anti-war rally has to be edgy, not comfortable. Emotions have to be high, nerves at least a bit on edge, anger tinged with fear. It shouldn't be just a picnic or a reunion. At the anti-WTO demonstration in Washington after the Seattle upsurge in the late 1990s, the police had orders to shoot to kill if things got out of hand. I doubt any cop had orders to shoot to kill in Washington, D.C., this last January. The political temperature was way too low.

An absence from the speakers' platform at that January UFPJ rally gives us a significant clue to the weakness of the anti-war movement. Ralph Nader was not invited, even though he is a major political figure on the left and a fierce critic of the war. Why was he not invited? Nader is still anathema to many Democrats for his third party run in 2000, and again in 2004. Even though the war in Iraq is a bipartisan enterprise, even though Democrats in Congress have voted year after year to give Bush the money to fight that war, the mainstream anti-war movement, as represented by UFPJ, is captive to the Democratic Party.

To clarify the consequences of this willing captivity, we can ask a simple question. Has the end of America's war on Iraq been brought closer by the votes in the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate? On March 23, the full House voted 218-212 to set a timeline on the withdrawal of U.S. troops, with September 1, 2008, as the putative date after which war funding might be restricted to withdrawal purposes only. It was not exactly a stringent deadline. It only required Bush to seek congressional approval before extending the occupation and spending new funds to do so.

So, the bill essentially adopted and enforced Bush's war plan and attendant "benchmarks" as spelled out in his January 10 speech. On March 27, the Senate voted 50-48 to start withdrawal in March 2008, said schedule being nonbinding on the president. Bush duly promised to veto all schedules for withdrawal coming out of Congress, and did so at the first opportunity. Meanwhile the war went on, with a supplemental, Democrat-approved $124 billion, more than Bush himself requested. As Congress considered the half trillion dollar FY 2008 Pentagon budget, there was no sign that the Democratic leadership would permit any serious attack on further war funding.

Thus, when it comes to the actual war, which has led to the bloody disintegration of Iraqi society, the deaths of up to 5,000 Iraqis a month, the death and mutilation of U.S. soldiers every day, nothing at all has happened since the Democrats rode to victory in November courtesy of popular revulsion in America against the war. Bush's reaction to this censure at the polls was to appoint a new commander in Iraq, General David Petraeus, to oversee the troop "surge" in Baghdad and Anbar province. The Democrats voted unanimously to approve Petraeus and then they okayed the money for the surge. Bush hinted that he would like to widen the war to Iran. Nancy Pelosi, chastened by catcalls at the annual AIPAC convention, swiftly abandoned all talk of compelling Bush to seek congressional authorization to make war on Iran.

Although nothing of any significance actually happened on March 23, to read liberal commentators one would think we'd witnessed some profound upheaval, courtesy of Nancy Pelosi's skillful uniting of the various Democratic factions. What she accomplished in practice was the neutering of the anti-war faction. In the end only eight Democrats (plus two Republicans) voted against the Supplemental Appropriation out of opposition to the war. The balance of 202 "No" votes came from Republicans who opposed Pelosi's bill as anti-Bush and anti-war. So, in Congress 420 representatives officially had no problem with the war in Iraq continuing until the eve of the next election. Ten were foursquare against it, which is more or less where Congress has always been, in terms of committed naysayers.

Anti-war forces in Congress are now weaker. Take Sam Farr of Santa Cruz, California, and Peter DeFazio of Eugene, Oregon, both congressmen with large progressive constituencies. In the last Republican-controlled Congress they were stout opponents of the war, voting against authorization to invade and money for the war thereafter. No longer. Pelosi handed Farr bailout money for his district's spinach growers, and DeFazio got funding for schools and libraries. Who knows? Perhaps a few dollars of the latter will go to wheelchair access for the paraplegics who will come home from Iraq over the next sixteen months, maimed in the war for which DeFazio just voted more money.

Seeking to explain his "Yes" vote for Pelosi's war-funding bill, Farr issued a press release saying, "This bill brings our troops home." But he also told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "They want to go gung-ho. They want to escalate in Iraq. So what would our 'no' votes mean?"

I doubt any cop had orders to shoot to kill in Washington, D.C., this last January. The political temperature was way too low.

The real anti-war movement proved itself incapable of pressuring House Democrats to hold out. As noted above, the January 27 demonstration organized by United for Peace and Justice did involve active lobbying of Democrats to hold their feet to the fire, but the demo itself was really a Bush-bashing session, with scant reminders that Bush's war has been and continues to be a bipartisan project.

After the Bush veto, the Democratic resistance has crumbled. Over in the House, Jack Murtha did his best, with a plan for re-review every three months. But when this bill went into conference, Democratic support for Murtha was slim. Reason: the Democratic presidential aspirants in the Senate – Clinton, Obama, Biden – don't want any sort of determined resistance to the war to prevail, courtesy of the Democrats. So now they're voting the money without deadlines or reservations. In fact, the Republican call for withdrawal to commence as soon as this September (unless the U.S. position in Iraq improves, which it will not) is a fiercer challenge to Bush than what the Democrats have finally managed.

The Democrats' reward for this shameful collapse? Perceived now as fraudulent

(**Cockburn** *continued on page 6)*

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Bringing the Border Wars Home

By Andrea Peacock

The sirens woke me up. The dogs broke into a howl, abruptly as though it woke them as well. Gee, that sounded close, I thought. Then the howls turned into barks, and Donna was outside calling them in.

A few moments later, shouts. Doug was out of bed, struggling with the inside-out sleeves of his robe, and I followed, tossing on a T-shirt and pair of shorts. We joined Donna on the back patio, where I peered around the corner of her orchid room and caught sight of a uniformed man standing on alert, next to a gray pickup truck.

"He's trying to keep them all corralled," she said. "I'm just hoping the carport is still there."

I went back inside to make coffee, then started out the front door for the paper. That's when the Border Patrol van pulled up, and I noticed the cruiser sitting in our driveway. "I thought that sounded close," I said to no one in particular.

As we watched, the agent from the backyard marched four short, stocky men wearing layers of dark green and brown clothing, each with their hands on the shoulder of the man in front of him, into the van. Another agent appeared from around the garage and escorted four more out of the back of the cruiser. Four, Donna said, had gotten away. I saw our neighbors across the street watching from their windows as well.

The second agent, tall and blond, walked over to us and told Donna to call the Border Patrol office if she noticed any damage. He was sorry about all the fuss, he said. It was the second time in as many weeks a truckload of illegal immigrants, chased by BP agents, had turned off into these neighborhood streets, cutting through yards in hopes of reaching the dry Santa Cruz riverbed.

"No problem," she said. "Is my carport still standing?"

Doug and I took our coffee and headed back to bed, luxuriating in a few moments in which we had no other tasks. We had a good half-hour before Donna knocked: "How's your Spanish?" she asked.

I threw a bathrobe on and followed her out the front door. Standing at the side of the house were two girls, dressed in the same bulky camouflaged layers as the men we had seen marched away. Donna handed one a phone. I asked in my pig Spanish: *¿Necessita ayuda?* One of the women gestured at the phone. I pointed to the nearly empty water bottle held by the second. *¿Agua?* They passed me their bottles, and I took them inside, filled them, grabbed a grocery sack and tossed some bananas and brownies in it. Back outside, the phone was not working. I handed over the food, and Donna coaxed the girls in.

They had a phone number for somewhere in Mexico, but we couldn't seem to get a call through. Our neighbors across the street were outside, talking loudly. "They were just here!" I heard the woman call, a shrill note of excitement to her voice. I expected they would call the Border Patrol; the cute blonde would be back.

But the minutes ticked away, and no one pulled up. The girls gradually began to relax, removing their hoods, then their jackets. They were a little older than I thought – not teenagers. *¿Habla Español?* the more assertive one asked me. *Poquito*, I replied. Very damn little – my restaurant Spanish was not going to be much help.

Donna called a friend of hers, a woman here legally but not a citizen. This put her in an awkward, vulnerable position, but she agreed to speak to our guests. When Donna got back on the phone, Carmen told her she would try calling the phone numbers the young women gave her, in the hope of finding someone who could give us a hint of our next move.

Donna urged them to sit at the dining room table. One was a little older than the other and seemed to understand a few words of English. They'd been walking (she motioned with her fingers) *en el desierto para cinco días,* she told me. *Sin comida, sin agua*. Walking in the desert for five days without food or water.

"Let me make you a little *comida*," I replied.

We'd just had a big birthday party for Doug and the fridge was full of leftovers. I got some eggs, cheese and onions cooking.

"Where did you cross?" I asked. Misunderstanding, she told me she was from Michoican, Acapulco. Her friend from Guerrero. Pero, from *donde* did they walk? *Cabeza Prieta*? No, she said, understanding now. Sasabe. *¿Donde es aqui?*

After they finished eating, I pulled out a map. I pointed out Sasabe, down on the border, Tucson, and just to the south the mission at San Xavier. "*La Misión,*" I told her. "*Aqui.*" They were on their way to Phoenix when La Migra caught them, she said. From there, she was to join her husband in Atlanta. Her friend was destined for Chicago.

More calls followed to Carmen. Doug left a message for a friend with some experience in these matters, choosing his words carefully. We waited. It was Donna's house, and ultimately her choice. "I guess you have to have the courage of your convictions," she said, then suggested showers, the washing machine and fresh clothes.

Their lives never cross with ours. The entire day, I realize, has been a gift.

Using mostly nouns and gestures, I got the idea across, dug out a couple pairs of jeans, T-shirts, sweaters and socks, and handed the pile over. Fortunately, they seemed to be my size – in fact, the jeans might well fit them better. While they bathed, we considered our options.

We could put them on a shuttle to Phoenix, I suggested. But they don't know where in Phoenix they are going, Donna replied. In the back of our minds, though, we all knew they couldn't stay long. The Border Patrol, the neighbors, all knew they'd been here. One of the neighbor's children worked for the BP: chances were good someone would call.

The younger woman finished showering first, and we spoke while her friend took a turn in the bathroom. She knew no English at all. *¿Tienes familia en Chicago, o amigos?* Family or friends in Chicago? I couldn't figure out whether to use the familiar or formal tense, and kept switching back and forth between the two. She didn't seem offended; I figured it didn't matter.

Sí, una hermana.

¿Como se llama? I asked.

Anna.

Andrea, I replied, then pointed and said, Donna.

Did I have any brothers or sisters?

Sí, one of each.

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Donna had just been told by a neighbor (the one with the Border Patrol children) that a person could lose their car for transporting illegal immigrants.

And Donna?

A brother, *y nada mas familia. Solo hermano.*

Then the dogs: *¿perro o perra?*

Perro, I said pointing to Kendall, then to Zelda: *y perra*. I laughed to myself: it was the one word that always gave me trouble in high-school Spanish class. I never got the hang of rolling my r's with any ease.

Another hour passed, with our guests sneaking brownies to the dogs, who now adored them. Another call from Carmen yielded a phone number: the older woman (whose name we learned was something unpronounceable, but we could call her Jessie) had an aunt in Los Angeles. She called, but got no answer. Her *tia*, she said, was working. She wouldn't be home till after six.

It was the start of an option. Maybe we could put them on a Greyhound and deliver them directly into auntie's care.

Donna had just been told by a neighbor (the one with the BP children) that a person could lose their car for transporting illegal immigrants. It's not like she had one to spare. Maybe we could give them a map, let them hitch.

The early hours of the afternoon rolled by, the possibilities a sequence of waves we rode. Calling La Migra, I reasoned to myself, was an option that would serve only our convenience. I could imagine parts of their journey: probably a long bus ride all the way from southern Mexico, then the hot desert walk. They'd had to use tweezers to get the cactus spines out of their hands. I had hiked that desert – prepared with a full pack, on cooler days. You couldn't help but brush up against cholla, and gopher burrows turn the ground into a maze of instability. You break through the crust constantly. What a monumental waste of energy to end up back where they had started.

If nothing else panned out, we could give them a good map, bag of food, and turn them out at dusk. But I'd heard too many horror stories of those who take advantage of women immigrants. This was no good choice.

I called Greyhound. Yes, there was a bus to Los Angeles tonight. No, my friends would not need to show ID. It would arrive in L.A. at 8:45 the next morning. I passed this all along to Donna. Should I tell them? I asked her. Sure, she said.

They were sitting in the dining room, looking at the maps spread all over the table. They had no idea of U.S. geography: where they were, how far it was to L.A., Atlanta, South Dakota, San Antonio. These all were far, we told them. L.A. the closest.

I presented my idea: Greyhound, *tia*, what did they think?

Jessie was guardedly excited, explaining my plan to her friend. *Pero*, she said, they only had Mexican money. We would buy the tickets, I replied, waving off her protests. I had no *otro* ideas – this was the *mas facile* way. The easiest way. Okay, she relented. But they must get a hold of her aunt and let tia know they were coming. That gave us all afternoon to kill. Take a siesta, I suggested. Make yourself at home. Blank looks. *Si necessita agua*, I pointed to the sink, *agua. Comida*, I pointed to the fridge, *comida. Bano, bano. Todo.* This time they understood. With *gracias* and *de nada*, I retreated to the patio with a book.

An hour later, when I walked into the kitchen to get some water, Jessie said something to me. I caught some conjugation of *comer*. Sure, *sí. ¿Menudo?* I asked. Pizza? It did not matter, so I heated up both, and they ate it all. We talked more: was Donna my sister?

No, ella es mi amiga. Vivo en Montana. We were just here visiting.

¿Vacaciones? Jessie asked.

Sí. It seemed the easiest explanation.

Jessie explained that she planned to spend the summer in South Dakota. Doing what, I could not figure out. I told her *la paisaje, la tierra es muy bonita*, and resisted the urge to suggest she drop by if in the neighborhood.

More hours passed, and they slept, curled together on the couch. Come evening, Doug took the car on several test runs, certain that the BP could be lurking in the neighborhood still. If they wanted us, I told him, they'd knock at the door and tell us so. But it made him feel better about The Plan. At 6:30, *tia* was home. First Jessie spoke to her, then handed the phone to me. The woman, Beatrice, thanked me profusely, said her daughter was sick and her husband not home. Could we wait till he returned at nine so she could talk to him about it?

I explained nine would be too late; that we had no other options. Could we please put her niece on a bus bound for L.A.? With more thanks, she offered to wire money, but we refused. They can do someone else a good turn, I said, feeling and sounding trite. Will they be stopped on the way? Will there be checkpoints? I thought not and told her so, but that was just going to be out of our control.

The 30-minute drive to Tucson felt unreal, like a dream or a movie. The whole day has passed this way, as though the hours were lifted out of ordinary time. Immigrants walk through the Santa Cruz every night: we see their tracks in the pecan groves, find their belongings discarded (backpacks, children's shoes) and reason that they must have had to run; we avoid dense brush while walking the dogs, preferring not to disturb anyone hiding out during the daylight hours. But other than these signs, their lives never cross with ours. The entire day, I realize, has been a gift.

It was a dark ride, and the city lights seemed to be floating, moving. Donna at

*(***Peacock** *continued on page 6)*

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(**Peacock** *continued from page 5)*

first drove like normal, then checked her speed. We did not need to get pulled over tonight. At the bus station, I went in first and bought the tickets. The agent wanted names: I was too tired to think on my feet and gave her my own, Donna's too. I scanned the waiting room: no police, no border patrol. It was, oddly enough, clean and comfortable. We could all wait in here. Back out in the parking lot we gathered their gear. Wearing my clothes, Donna's makeup and carrying some old travel bags and purses we pressed upon them, they looked like Americanas. I gave Jessie last minute instructions: I had gotten them on an earlier bus – they would arrive sooner than we planned. The bus would make some stops, *altos, para mas gente, mas personas*. They should stay on. I had to look up this last word: *quedarse*. She understood. Donna bought a bunch of candy and stuffed it – along with a change purse full of cash – in their bags. We hugged, and Jessie held me in a long, strong grip. Their bus was called; they headed for the door: puerto tres. We stood back, held our breaths as they passed the ticket taker, then waved one last time as they passed the window on their way to board. CP

Andrea Peacock coauthored *The Essential Grizzly* with her husband Doug.

(**Cockburn** *continued from page 3)*

in their claims to oppose the war, their standing in the polls is as low as Bush's. Latest news is that the American military presence in Iraq will double by the end of the year.

Do anti-war "movements" end wars? The Vietnam war ended primarily because the Vietnamese defeated the Americans, and because a huge number of U.S. troops were in open mutiny. At home, a large sector of the society was in mutiny too. Anti-war movements are often most significant in their afterlife – schooling a new generation in attitudes and tactics of resistance. What's happened here in the U.S.A. across the intervening years since Vietnam is a steady, unsurprising decline in the left's overall political confidence and ambition and, as in the 1990s, a disastrous failure to attack the Democratic Party and Democratic administration led by Clinton and Gore for the onslaught on Yugoslavia and the inhumane sanctions against Iraq.

The Vietnam war ended primarily because the Vietnamese defeated the Americans, and because a huge number of U.S. troops were in open mutiny.

In the Bush years we've seen a further decline in any independent left with any unified theoretical and practical strategy or even political theory; also a rise in unconstructive and indeed demobilizing paranoia, as in the orgy of 9/11 conspiracism. The campuses are sedate. The labor movement is reeling. To describe the anti-war movement in its effective form is really to mention a few good efforts – the anti-recruitment campaigns, the tours by those who have lost children in Iraq, or three or four brave souls – Cindy Sheehan, who single-handedly reanimated the anti-war movement last year, commencing with her vigil outside Bush's Texas ranch, or the radical Catholic Kathy Kelly, or Medea Benjamin and her "Code Pink" activists.

What were the big surprise demonstrations in the U.S. last year? Quite suddenly major American cities saw gigantic, militant demonstrations of immigrants – mostly Hispanic. Their fury was at brutal treatment and harsh new laws against illegal migrants, without whose low-paid toil agriculture in states like California would come to a halt. The war wasn't an issue. CP

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